

THIEN TAO
O R,
THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN
SVB FIGVRÂ
XLI

My object all sublime
I shall achieve in time
To make the punishment fit the crime
The punishment fit the crime!

W.S. GILBERT.

"THE DECAY OF MANNERS."

SINCE nobody can have the presumption to doubt the demonstration of St. Thomas Aquinas that this world is the best of all possible worlds, it follows that the imperfect condition of things which I am about to describe can only obtain in some other universe; probably the whole affair is but the figment of my diseased imagination. Yet if this be so, how can we reconcile the disease with perfection?

Clearly there is something wrong here; the apparent syllogism turns out on examination to be an enthymeme with a suppressed and impossible Major. There is no progression on these lines, and what I foolishly mistook for a nice easy way to glide into my story proves but the blindest of blind alleys.

We must begin therefore by the simple and austere process of beginning.

The conditions of Japan was at this time (what time? Here we are in trouble with the historian at once. But let me say that I will have no interference with my story on the part of all these dull sensible people. I am going straight on, and if the reviews are unfavourable, one has always the resource of suicide) dangerously unstable. The warrior aristocracy of the Upper House had been so diluted with successful cheesemongers that adulteration had become a virtue as highly profitable as adultery. In the Lower House brains were still esteemed, but they had been interpreted as the knack of passing examinations.

The recent extension of the franchise to women had rendered the Yoshiwara the most formidable of the political organizations, while the physique of the nation had been seriously impaired by the results of a law which, by assuring them in case of injury or illness of a life-long competence of idleness which they could never have obtained otherwise by the most laborious toil, encouraged all workers to be utterly careless of their health. The training of servants indeed at this time consisted solely of careful practical instruction in the art of falling down stairs; and the richest man in the country was an ex-butler who, by breaking his leg on no less than thirty-eight occasions, had acquired a pension which put that of a field-marshal altogether into the shade.

As yet, however, the country was not yet irretrievably doomed. A system of intrigue and blackmail, elaborated by the governing classes to the highest degree of efficiency, acted as a powerful counterpoise. In theory all were equal; in practice the permanent officials, the real rulers of the country, were a distinguished and trustworthy body of men. Their interest was to govern well, for any civil or foreign disturbance would undoubtedly have fanned the sparks of discontent into the roaring flame of revolution.

And discontent there was. The unsuccessful cheesemongers were very bitter against the Upper House; and those who had failed in examinations wrote appalling diatribes against the folly of the educational system.

The trouble was that they were right; the government was well enough in fact, but in theory had hardly a leg to stand on. In view of the growing clamour, the official classes were perturbed; for many of their number were intelligent enough to see that a thoroughly irrational system, however well it may work in practice, cannot for ever be maintained against the attacks of those who, though they may be secretly stigmatized as doctrinaires, can bring forward unanswerable arguments. The people had power, but not reason; so were amenable

to the fallacies which they mistook for reason and not to the power which they would have imagined to be tyranny. An intelligent plebs is docile; and educated canaille expects everything to be logical. The shallow sophisms of the socialist were intelligible; they could not be refuted by the profounder and therefore unintelligible propositions of the Tory.

The mob could understand the superficial resemblance of babies; they could not be got to understand that the circumstances of education and environment made but a small portion of the equipment of a conscious being. The brutal and truthful "You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear" had been forgotten for the smooth and plausible fallacies of such writers as Ki Ra Di.

So serious had the situation become, indeed, that the governing classes had abandoned all dogmas of Divine Right and the like as untenable. The theory of heredity had broken down, and the ennoblement of the cheesemongers made it not only false, but ridiculous.

We consequently find them engaged in the fatuous task of defending the anomalies which disgusted the nation by a campaign of glaring and venal sophistries. These deceived nobody, and only inspired the contempt, which might have been harmless, with a hate which threatened to engulf the community in an abyss of the most formidable convulsions.

Such was the razor-edge upon which the unsteady feet of the republic strode when, a few years before the date of my visit, the philosopher Kwaw landed at Nagasaki after an exhilarating swim from the mainland.

II

"STANDING ALONE."

KWAW, when he crossed the Yellow Sea, was of the full age of thirty-two years.

The twenty previous equinoxes had passed over his head as he wandered, sole human tenant, among the colossal yet ignoble ruins of Wei Hai Wei. His only companions were the lion and the lizard, who frequented the crumbling remains of the officers' quarters; while in the little cemetery the hoofs of the wild ass beat (uselessly, if he wished to wake them) upon the tombs of the sportsmen that once thronged those desolate halls.

During this time Kwaw devoted his entire attention to the pursuit of philosophy; for the vast quantities of excellent stores abandoned by the British army left him no anxiety upon the score of hunger.

In the first year he disciplined and conquered his body and its emotions.
In the next six years he disciplined and conquered his mind and its thoughts.

In the next two years he had reduced the Universe to the Yang and the Yin and their permutations in the trigrams of Fo-hi and the hexagrams of King Wu.
In the last year he abolished the Yang and the Yin, and became united with the great Tao.

All this was very satisfactory to Kwaw. But even his iron frame had become somewhat impaired by the unvarying diet of tinned provisions; and it was perhaps only by virtue of the talisman that he succeeded in his famous attempt to outdo the feats of Captain Webb.

Nor was his reception less than a triumph. So athletic a nation as the Japanese still were could not but honour so superb an achievement, though it cost them dear, inasmuch as the Navy League (by an astute series of political moves) compelled the party in power to treble the Navy, build a continuous line of forts around the sea-coast, and expend many billions of yen upon the scientific breeding of a more voracious species of shark than had hitherto infested their shores.

So they carried Kwaw shoulder-high to the Yoshiwara, and passed him the glad hand, and called out the Indians, and annexed his personal property for relics, and otherwise followed the customs of the best New York Society, while the German Band accompanied the famous Ka Ru So to the following delightful ballad:

CHORUS. Blow the tom-tom, bang the flute!
Let us all be merry!
I'm a party with acute
Chronic beri-beri.

I.
Monday I'm a skinny critter
Quite Felicien-Rops-y.
Blow the cymbal, bang the zither!
Tuesday I have dropsy.
Chorus.

II.
Wednesday cardiac symptoms come;
Thursday diabetic,
Blow the fiddle, strum the drum!
Friday I'm paretic.
Chorus.

III.
If on Saturday my foes
Join in legions serried,
Then, on Sunday, I suppose
I'll be beri-beried!
Chorus.

One need not be intimately familiar with the Japanese character to understand that Kwaw and his feat were forgotten in a very few days; but a wealthy Daimio, with a taste for observation, took it into his head to inquire of Kwaw for what purpose he had entered the country in so strange a manner. It will simplify matters if I reproduce in extenso the correspondence, which was carried on by telegram.

(1) Who is your honourable self, and why has your excellency paid us cattle the distinguished compliment of a visit?

(2) This disgusting worm is great Tao. I humbly beg of your sublime radiance to trample his slave.

- (3) Regret great toe unintelligible.
- (4) Great Tao — T.A.O. — Tao.
- (5) What is the great Tao?
- (6) The result of subtracting the universe from itself.
- (7) Good, but this decaying dog cannot grant your honourable excellency's sublime desire, but, on the contrary, would earnestly pray your brilliant serenity to spit upon his grovelling "joro."
- (8) Profound thought assures your beetle-headed suppliant that your glorious nobility must meet him before the controversy can be decided.
- (9) True. Would your sublimity condescend to defile himself by entering this muck-sweeper's miserable hovel?
- (10) Expect leprous dragon with beri beri at your high mightiness's magnificent heavenly palace tomorrow (Thursday) afternoon at three sharp. Thus met Kwaw, the poet-philosopher of China; and Juju, the godfather of his country.

Sublime moment in eternity! To the names of Joshua and Hezekiah add that of Kwaw! For though he was a quarter of an hour late for the appointment, the hands went back on the dial of Juju's chronometer, so that no shadow of distrust or annoyance clouded the rapture of that supreme event.

III

"THE MANIFESTING OF SIMPLICITY."

"WHAT," said Juju, "O great Tao, do you recommend as a remedy for the ills of my unhappy country?"

The sage replied as follows: "O mighty and magniloquent Daimio, your aristocracy is not an aristocracy because it is not an aristocracy. In vain you seek to alter this circumstance by paying the noxious vermin of the Dai Li Pai Pur to write fatuous falsehoods maintaining that your aristocracy is an aristocracy because it is an aristocracy.

"As Heracleitus overcame the antinomy of Xenophanes and Parmenides, Melissus and the Eleatic Zero, and Ens and the Non-Ens by his Becoming, so let me say to you; the aristocracy will be an aristocracy by becoming an aristocracy.

"Ki Ra Di and his dirty-faced friends wish to level down the good practice to the bad theory; you should oppose them be levelling up the bad theory to the good practice.

"Your enviers boast that you are no better than they; prove to them that they are as good as you. They speak of a nobility of fools and knaves; show to them wise and honest men, and the socialistic ginger is no longer hot in the individualistic mouth."

Juju grunted assent. He had gone almost to sleep, but Kwaw, absorbed in his subject, never noticed the fact. He went on with the alacrity of a steam-roller, and the direct and purposeful vigour of a hypnotized butterfly.

"Man is perfect by his identity with the great Tao. Subsidiary to this he must have balanced perfectly the Yang and the Yin. Easier still is it to rule the sixfold star of Intellect; while for the base the control of the body and its emotions is the earliest step.

"Equilibrium is the great law, and perfect equilibrium is crowned by identity with the great Tao."

He emphasized this sublime assertion by a deliberate blow upon the protruding abdomen of the worthy Juju.

"Pray continue your honourable discourse!" exclaimed the half-awakened Daimio.

Kwaw went on, and I think it only fair to say that he went on for a long time, and that because you have been fool enough to read thus far, you have no excuse for being fool enough to read farther.

"Phenacetin is a useful drug in fever, but woe to that patient who shall imbibe it in collapse. Because calomel is a dangerous remedy in appendicitis, we do not condemn its use in simple indigestions.

"As above so beneath! said Hermes the thrice greatest. The laws of the physical world are precisely paralleled by those of the moral and intellectual sphere. To the prostitute I prescribe a course of training by which she shall comprehend the holiness of sex. Chastity forms part of that training, and I should hope to see her one day a happy wife and mother. To the prude equally I prescribe a course of training by which she shall comprehend the holiness of sex. Unchastity forms part of that training, and I should hope to see her one day a happy wife and mother.

"To the bigot I commend a course of Thomas Henry Huxley; to the infidel a practical study of ceremonial magic. Then, when the bigot has knowledge and the infidel faith, each may follow without prejudice his natural inclination; for he will no longer plunge into his former excesses.

"So also she who was a prostitute from native passion may indulge with safety in the pleasure of love; she who was by nature cold may enjoy a virginity in no wise marred by her disciplinary course of unchastity. But the one will understand and love the other.

"I have been taxed with assaulting what is commonly known as virtue. True; I hate it, but only in the same degree that I hate what is commonly known as vice.

"So it must be acknowledged that one who is but slightly unbalanced needs a milder correction than whoso is obsessed by prejudice. There are men who make a fetish of cleanliness; they shall work in a fitter's shop, and learn that dirt is the mark of honourable toil. There are those whose lives are rendered wretched by the fear of infection; they see bacteria of the deadliest sort in all things but the actual solutions of carbolic acid and mercuric chloride with which they hysterically combat their invisible foemen; such would I send to live in the bazaar at Delhi, where they shall haply learn that dirt makes little difference after all.

"There are slow men who need a few months' experience of the hustle of the stockyards; there are business men in a hurry, and they shall travel in Central Asia to acquire the art of repose.

"So much for the equilibrium, and for two months in every year each member of your governing classes shall undergo this training under skilled advice.

"But what of the Great Tao? For one month in every year each of these men shall seek desperately for the Stone of the Philosophers. By solitude and fasting for the social and luxurious, by drunkenness and debauch for the austere, by scourging for those afraid of physical pain, by repose for the restless, and toil for the idle, by bull-fights for the humanitarian, and the care of little children for the callous, by rituals for

the rational, and by philosophy for the credulous, shall these men, while yet unbalanced, seek to attain to unity with the great Tao. But for those whose intellect is purified and co-ordinated, for those whose bodies are in health, and whose passions are at once eager and controlled, it shall be lawful to choose their own way to the One Goal; videlicet, identity with that great Tao which is above the antithesis of Yang and Yin."

Even Kwaw felt tired, and applied himself to saké-and-soda. Refreshed, he continued: "The men who are willing by this means to become the saviours of their country shall be called the Synagogue of Satan, so as to keep themselves from the friendship of the fools who mistake names for things. There shall be masters of the Synagogue, but they shall never seek to dominate. They shall most carefully abstain from inducing any man to seek the Tao by any other way than that of equilibrium. They shall develop individual genius without considering whether in their opinion its fruition will tend to the good or evil of their country or of the world; for who are they to interfere with a soul whose balance has been crowned by the most holy Tao?

"The masters shall be great men among men; but among great men they shall be friends.

"Since equilibrium will have become perfect, a greater than Napoleon shall arise, and the peaceful shall rejoice thereat; a greater than Darwin, and the minister in his pulpit give open thanks to God.

"The instructed infidel shall no longer sneer at the church-goer, for he will have been compelled to go to church until he saw the good points as well as the bad; and the instructed devotee will no longer detest the blasphemer, because he will have laughed with Ingersoll and Saladin.

"Give the lion the heart of the lamb, and the lamb the force of the lion; and they will lie down in peace together."

Kwaw ceased, and the heavy and regular breathing of Juju assured him that his words had not been wasted; at last that restless and harried soul had found supreme repose.

Kwaw tapped the gong. "I have achieved my task," said he to the obsequious major-domo, "I pray leave to retire from the Presence." "I beg your excellency to follow me," replied the gorgeous functionary, "his lordship has commanded me to see that your holiness is supplied with everything that you desire."

Then the sage laughed aloud.

IV

"THINGS TO BE BELIEVED."

SIX months passed by, and Juju, stirring in his sleep, remembered the duties of politeness, and asked for Kwaw.

"He is on your lordship's estate at Nikko," the servants hastened to reply, "and he has turned the whole place completely upside down. Millions of yen have been expended monthly; he has even mortgaged this very palace in which your lordship has been asleep; a body of madmen has seized the reins of government—"

"The Synagogue of Satan!" gasped the outraged Daimio.

"—And you are everywhere hailed as the Godfather of your country!"

"Do not tell me that the British war has ended disastrously for us!" and he called for the elaborate apparatus of hari-kari.

"On the contrary, my lord, the ridiculous Sa Mon, who would never go to sea because he was afraid of being sick, although his genius for naval strategy had no equal in the Seven Abysses of Water, after a month as stowaway on a fishing boat (by the order of Kwaw) assumed the rank of Admiral of the Fleet, and has inflicted a series of complete and crushing defeats upon the British Admirals, who though they had been on the water all their lives, had incomprehensibly omitted to acquire any truly accurate knowledge of the metaphysical systems of Sho Pi Naour and Ni Tchze.

"Again, Hu Li, the financial genius, who had hitherto been practically useless to his country on account of that ugliness and deformity which led him to shun the society of his fellows, was compelled by Kwaw to exhibit himself as a freak. A fortnight of this cured him of shyness; and within three months he has nearly doubled the revenue and halved the taxes. Your lordship has spent millions of yen; but is to-day a richer man than when your excellency went to sleep."

"I will go and see this Kwaw," said the Daimio. The servants then admitted that the Mikado in person had been waiting at the palace door for over three months, for the very purpose of begging permission to conduct him thither, but that he had been unwilling to disturb the sleep of the Godfather of his country.

Impossible to describe the affecting scene when these two magnanimous beings melted away (as it were) in each other's arms.

Arrived at the estate of Juju at Nikko, what wonder did these worthies express to see the simple means by which Kwaw had worked his miracles! In a glade of brilliant cherry and hibiscus (and any other beautiful trees you can think of) stood a plain building of stone, which after all had not cost millions of yen, but a very few thousands only. Its height was equal to its breadth, and its length was equal to the sum of these, while the sum of these three measurements was precisely equal to ten times the age of Kwaw in units of the span of his hand. The walls were tremendously thick and there was only one door and two windows, all in the eye of the sunset. One cannot describe the inside of the building, because to do so would spoil all the fun for other people. It must be seen to be understood, in any case; and there it stands to this day, open to anybody who is strong enough to force in the door.

But when they asked for Kwaw, he was not to be found. He had left trained men to carry out the discipline and the initiations, these last being the chief purpose of the building, saying that he was homesick for the lions and lizards of Wei-Hai-Wei, and that anyway he hadn't enjoyed a decent swim for far too long.

There is unfortunately little room for doubt that the new and voracious species of sharks (which Japanese patriotism had spent such enormous sums in breeding) is responsible for the fact that he has never again been heard of.

The Mikado wept; but, brightening up, exclaimed: "Kwaw found us a confused and angry mob; he left us a diverse, yet harmonious, republic; while let us never forget that not only have we developed men of genius in every branch of practical life, but many among us have had our equilibrium crowned by that supreme glory of humanity, realization of our identity with the great and holy Tao."

Wherewith he set aside no less than three hundred and sixty-five days in every year, and one extra day every fourth year, as days of special rejoicing.

NOTES ON: THIEN TAO

"The Way of Heaven"

OR THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

(Liber XLI, Class C)

Originally published in Konx Om Pax, 1907 e.v.

Assigned to the Adeptus Major Grade of the A\A\.

At its original publication, this instruction was assigned neither a Document Class nor a catalogue number. In fact, it has never been published with official A\A\ sanction, outside of individual contemporary lineages. The formulation of the A\A\ was, in 1907, in its early stages, and these details may not have as yet been formalized. Later (in the "Syllabus" in Equinox I:10), it was designated as a Class C Document, and given the number XLI. No explanation was given for the assignment of this number.

"LIBER XLI. — Thien TAO (in Konx Om Pax).

"An advanced study of Attainment by the method of equilibrium on the ethical plane."